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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001867

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TFIZOI: GOJ BRACES FOR COUNTRYWIDE ANTI-WAR  
DEMONSTRATIONS IN JORDAN AFTER FRIDAY PRAYERS AND BEYOND

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm. Reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

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PUBLIC RAGE SIMMERING FOR A WEEK  
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1. (C) Although the coalition's military actions against Iraq started a week ago, this Friday will be the first time that Jordanians will congregate for Friday prayers and express their pent up frustrations with the "US aggression" after watching events unfold on t.v. all week. Adding to the heightened emotions will be today's burial in Irbid governorate, north of Amman, of the four Jordanian students killed near Mosul while trying to flee Iraq.

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GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZED DEMONSTRATIONS  
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2. (C) The GOJ has been negotiating with the main protest organizers all week (the Islamic Action Front and the professional associations chief among them). Amman, Jerash, Salt, Irbid and Ramtha are just some of the cities where government authorized anti-war demonstrations are planned after Friday prayers tomorrow, with other demonstrations occurring on Sunday, March 30. Authorized demonstrations are also planned at some of the Palestinian refugee camps scattered throughout Jordan. While the GOJ recognizes the need to allow the public to vents its anger, Jordan's Public Security Department (PSD) is very concerned that such demonstrations (or spontaneous unauthorized protests elsewhere) could turn violent after a week of people seeing Iraq bombed and innocent civilians dying.

3. (C) All expectations are that Friday will serve as a test of the PSD's crowd control abilities, and the government's overall dexterity at crafting a message that acknowledges popular anger while maintaining order.  
GNEHM